

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T CAIRO 17746

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR US EG LY
SUBJ: FAHMY'S QUERY RE US POLICY TOWARD LIBYA

1. FAHMY SUMMONED ME CHRISTMAS DAY. ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN ADVANCE PRESS INDICATIONS THAT HE WOULD RAISE GOE DESIRE FOR A US "VISUALIZATION" OF FUTURE ME PEACE (CAIRO 17723), HE DID NOT DO SO. INSTEAD, HE HAD THREE THINGS ON HIS MIND: (A) LIBYA, (B) PROPOSED USG ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL IN FY 78, (C) THE SUDAN. THIS MESSAGE COVERS LIBYA. OTHER SUBJECTS WILL BE SENT IN SEPTELS.

2. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, MAHMUD TUHAMI, RECENTLY APPOINTED EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA, (FORMERLY HEAD OF THE NORTH AMERICAN DEPT IN MFA), RETURNED A FEW DAYS AGO FOR A WEEK'S LEAVE. TUHAMI, IT SEEMS, HAD BRIEFED FAHMY ON RECENT LIBYAN DEVELOPMENTS AS WELL AS ON HIS INTERPRETATION OF USG POLICY RE LIBYA. ON THE LATTER, TUHAMI APPARENTLY CARPED THAT THE US EMBASSY IN TRIPOLI IS NOT COOPERATING SUFFICIENTLY WITH HIM. IT WAS NOT SHARING INFORMATION. MOREOVER, TUHAMI REPORTED, HE HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT US RELATIONS WITH LIBYA ARE BETTER THAN WE
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CLAIM THEY ARE.

3. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, TUHAMI CLAIMED THAT USG HAS SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH THE LIBYANS TO BUILD TWO "EARLY WARNING STATIONS." TUHAMI HAD EVEN MENTIONED THE PLACES, BUT FAHMY HAD FORGOTTEN THEM.

AS I WAS WITH HIM, HE RECEIVED A NOTE FROM TUHAMI STATING THAT THE STATIONS WE HAD ALLEDGEDLY AGREED TO BUILD ARE PART OF A COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK FOR QADHAFI'S USE, OPERATING OUT OF THE FORMER WHEELUS AIR BASE. ANY SUCH ASSISTANCE TO LIBYA, FAHMY CONTEDED, BE IT "EARLY WARNING STATIONS" OR "COMMUNICATIONS," SIMPLY STRENGTHENS QADHAFI AND ENCOURAGES HIM TO CARRY ON SUBVERSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ELSEWHERE. FAHMY OPINED THAT THE USG AND GOE HAVE SIMILAR INTERESTS IN LIBYA. BOTH WANT A WELL BEHAVED LIBYA WITHOUT SOVIET INFLUENCE. HE HAD BEEN UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS WERE COOPERATING TO THIS END, BUT TUHAMI'S COMMENTS RAISED SOME QUESTION ABOUT OUR INTENTIONS IN LIBYA. FAHMY ASKED THAT WE PROVIDE HIM WITH A DETAILED BRIEFING ON WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN LIBYA AND ABOUT OUR POLICY TOWARD LIBYA.

4. I TOLD FAHMY THAT, WITH ALL RESPECT TO TUHAMI, I THOUGHT THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR WAS ENGAGING IN IDLE SPECULATION. AS FAHMY KNEW FULL WELL FROM PAST EXCHANGES ON LIBYA, WE HAVE DECLINED TO RESPOND TO FREQUENT LIBYAN OVERTURES FOR BETTER RELATIONS BECUASE WE DID NOT WISH TO DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD EMBARRASS SADAT OR STRENGTHEN QADHAFI. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, WE CONTINUE TO REFUSE AN EXPORT PERMIT FOR THE C-130S BOUGHT BY THE LIBYANS OR TO PERMIT AN AMERICAN FIRM TO BUILD AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM WANTED BY LIBYA. MOREOVER, AFTER CONSULTING WITH GOE, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO DECLINE TO SEND AN AMBASSADOR TO RIPOLI.

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I KNEW FROM FREQUENT TALKS THE SECRETARY'S PERSONAL CONCERN THAT NOTHING BE DONE VIS-A-VIS LIBYA THAT MIGHT CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR SADAT. AS A RESULT, CONTRARY TO TUHAMI'S IMPRESSION, OUR RELATIONS WITH LIBYA CONTINUE TO BE STRAINED.

5. I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF USG AGREEMENT TO BUILD EITHER AN "EARLY WARNING STATION" OR A "COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK" AND I FRANKLY DOUBTED THE STORY. IF PURELY COMMUNICATIONS ARE INVOLVED, IT WAS OF COURSE POSSIBLE THAT A PRIVATE AMERICAN COMPANY HAD RECEIVED A CONTRACT FOR SUCH A PROJECT. NO EXPORT LICENSE IS REQUIRED FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF COMMUNICATIONS, WHICH CAN BE BOUGHT ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. I COULD ASSURE HIM, HOWEVER, THAT OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS' POLICIES TOWARD LIBYA CONTINUE TO BE SIMILAR. WE WANT MORE THAN LIBYAN PROFESSIONS OF A DESIRE FOR BETTER RELATIONS, BUT A CESSATION OF QADHAFI-INSTIGATED SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ELSEWHERE.

6. I SAID I WAS FRANKLY DISAPPOINTED IN TUHAMI AND URGED FAHMY NOT TO HEED SUCH IDLE SPECULATION, WHICH I COULD ONLY ASSUME IS PRODUCED BY THE FRUSTRATIONS OF WORKING IN THE CONSTRAINED TRIPOLI ENVIRONMENT. I WOULD, OF COURSE, ASK FOR THE INFORMATION HE HAD REQUESTED.

7. ALTHOUGH FAHMY HAD INITIALLY EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE TUHAMI REPORT, I THINK THAT BY THE END OF OUR DISCUSSION, HAD HAD HIMSELF COME TO REALIZE THAT WE ARE NOT WORKING BEHIND GOE'S BACK IN LIBYA. REQUEST DEPT PREPARE BRIEFING REQUESTED BY FAHMY ON OUR ESTIMATE OF CURRENT LIBYAN INTERNAL SITUATION AND USG POLICY TOWARD LIBYA.
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